

via fax: 011 502 2239 0090  
 Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo  
 President of Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2424 1714  
 Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado  
 Human Rights Ombudsman of Guatemala

September 15, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Taskforce on Central America, are extremely concerned for the safety of Radio 10 presenters **Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla** and **Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda** and the other staff members.

At 8.40 am on August 22, a caller on Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda's Radio 10 show threatened him live on air, saying: "This is a message for Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda; by talking about tax evasion you are digging your own grave; we are giving you eight days to leave the country." At 7:00 am on August 23, Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla was out jogging in Guatemala City when he was accosted by two unidentified men riding a gold-colored motorbike. One of the men got off the motorbike, approached Vinicio Aguilar from behind, put his gun into his mouth and shot him. The bullet broke Vinicio Aguilar's right jaw, perforated his cheek and wounded his right hand. The gunman's accomplice shouted, "Finish him off, finish him off," but the gunman replied, "He's already dead." When the two assailants left the scene Vinicio Aguilar was able to make his way home. Even though he has recovered sufficiently to be discharged, he is still staying in the hospital because of concerns for his safety

The attempted murder of Vinicio Aguilar and the threat against Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda have been reported to the government's Human Rights Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman has ordered special security measures to be taken to protect the two journalists, but so far no action has been taken to implement these measures.

Both Vinicio Aguilar and Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda have publicly denounced tax evasion by an important Guatemalan company on their radio shows and have also covered other controversial issues such as public security, genocide and impunity. The Guatemala City-based Radio 10 has suffered acts of intimidation since 2005, including theft of broadcasting equipment, interference with their transmission signal, judicial harassment and administrative obstacles regarding their license and permits.

In light of these facts, **we strongly urge you to:**

- take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla and Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda in accordance with their own wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the attempted murder of Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla and the death threat against Oscar Rodolfo Castaneda, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- outline the measures you are employing to guarantee freedom of expression and of information in Guatemala.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

UA 238/06 Guatemala

cc: Radio 10 ~ via fax: 011 502 2332 9308  
 Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax: 202 745 1908  
 Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477  
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: 202-458-3992  
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email  
 US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

**The following people hereby urge that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**